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Protecting the most vulnerable victims of Human Trafficking *Workgroup to Study Safe Harbor Policy for Youth Victims*

Baltimore, Md - Governor Larry Hogan announced today the formation of the *Workgroup to Study Safe Harbor Policy for Youth Victims of Human Trafficking*. Established by [Chapter 0091 of 2015](#), the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention (GOCCP) is staffing the Workgroup, which is charged with studying what legal protections and services Maryland should offer for young people under the age of 18 who are victims of human trafficking.

The Workgroup will examine legal protections for youth victims of human trafficking and the provisions of services for youth victims of human trafficking. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 28 states have enacted Safe Harbor laws, which typically include a statement of intent for how sexually exploited youth should be treated under the law.

Over the coming months, the Workgroup will:

- Compile existing information on, and identify the needs of youth victims of human trafficking;
- Compile and identify public and private-sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs;
- Identify gaps in services and resources that are currently available to meet the needs of youth victims of human trafficking;
- Collect and compile data on the number of youth victims of human trafficking in Maryland, including the number in each jurisdiction;
- Evaluate current safe harbor policies in other states, and the legal protections for youth victims of human trafficking in those states; and
- Make recommendations regarding (1) legislation and policy initiatives to address the provision of services and legal protections for youth victims of human trafficking; (2) the collection of data to identify youth victims of human trafficking; (3) funding requirements and budgetary priorities; and (4) any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the workgroup.

"Human trafficking is an insidious crime that strikes at the very heart of our communities," said Governor Larry Hogan. "We have made progress in our fight against human trafficking, but more must be done. Young victims of human trafficking need our complete support and ensuring we are meeting the needs of youth victims as best we can requires special attention."

“I look forward to working with members of this Workgroup as it fulfills its mission to examine this despicable business,” said John C. Wobensmith, Secretary of State and Chair of the panel. “The expertise and insight of each of the members will be helpful as we work to formulate legal protections and policies on how Maryland should treat victims of human trafficking.”

“The Workgroup will undertake the important work of exploring how Maryland can best serve juvenile victims of human sex trafficking,” said Christopher B. Shank, GOCCP Executive Director. “By identifying them as victims, we can divert them from the juvenile or criminal justice system to programs that offer victims services specifically designed for victims of human trafficking.”

The Workgroup’s first meeting will be held September 15 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. in the Joint Hearing Room of the Legislative Services Building in Annapolis. It will report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2015.

Workgroup Members:

Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith, Chairman
Senator Susan Lee
Delegate Marice Morales
Andrea Garvey, Maryland Department of Human Resources
Doug Mohler, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
Edward Clarke, Maryland State Department of Education
Lt. Matthew Kail, Maryland State Police
Melanie Shapiro, Chief Attorney, Office of the Public Defender Juvenile Division
Patricia Arriaza, Governor’s Office for Children
Thomas Stack, Governor’s Office of Crime Control & Prevention
Steven Kroll, Esquire, Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association
Detective David Blackburn, Baltimore County Police Department
Melissa Snow, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Amanda Rodriguez, TurnAround, Inc.
Mona Long, Maryland State Education Association
Amelia Rubenstein, Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force
Cpl. Christopher Heid, Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force
Christine Raino, Shared Hope
Benjamin Moser, Ayuda
Nicole Lee, Survivor

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